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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 DILI 000132

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/30/2017
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SUBJECT: SECURITY SECTOR UPDATE

REF: A) DILI 119, B) 120

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CLASSIFIED BY: Seiji T Shiratori, Deputy Chief of Mission, EXEC, State.

REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

11. (C) Summary: Post remains concerned by developments in the security sector following a United Nations Police (UNPOL) request to the GOET to deploy elements from the East Timorese Defense Force (F-FDTL) into the capital city of Dili. While the Commander of the F-FDTL, Brigadier General Taur Matan Ruak, gave reassurances to both UNMIT and the Australian-led International Stabilization Force (ISF) on March 20 that all of his soldiers now understood their rules of engagement (ROE), violations continue to occur. According to UNMIT Special Representative of the Secretary-General (SRSG) Atul Khare, several of these infractions are currently being investigated by UNMIT, but it is unclear whether these measures will lead to any accountability. Meanwhile, international military observers continue to speak of the inevitability of conflict between F-FDTL units and ISF elements, largely because of poor coordination which exists between the two organizations, further complicated by the significant professional divide which seriously impairs their ability to function together on the same proverbial playing field. It appears that Dili remains in a potentially dangerous holding pattern as long as the F-FDTL elements are deployed in town. End summary.

12. (C) ISF sources report that F-FDTL violations of their own ROE continue. The following list details previously unreported incidents which have occurred since March 18, including a few incidents of significance. Reftel A provides information on incidents which occurred prior to March 18.

a. March 21: ISF reported that there are now 200 F-FDTL soldiers operating in the Dili area.

b. March 21: Residents living near the Ministry of Education expressed to UN Police (UNPOL) their displeasure regarding the behavior of an F-FDTL element providing static security there. They complained about the detention of local persons, in addition to a shooting incident which took place on March 18. When UNPOL and ISF raised concerns about the incidents of F-FDTL

misconduct at this and other locations, Ruak apparently agreed and stated that "he would like to replace it with an UNPOL detachment." However, as of March 29 the F-FDTL section remains at site.

c. March 22: A nine-man armed F-FDTL patrol was seen in the vicinity of Comoro. According to the F-FDTL's ROE, F-FDTL is not supposed to be patrolling, only providing static security.

d. March 23: An armed F-FDTL patrol was spotted near the Ministry of Finance. Separate reporting on this date also indicates that F-FDTL personnel responded to verbal abuse by civilians with weapon butt strokes and kicks.

e. March 24: An armed F-FDTL section was sighted in Kampung Baru. Reports indicated that members were intoxicated.

f. March 25: The same F-FDTL section reported on March 24 was cited in Kampung Baru again, and members were reportedly intoxicated. After being confronted by a Malaysian UNPOL unit, the F-FDTL section commander threateningly charged his M-16A2 rifle at the Malaysians. However, the incident was defused shortly thereafter by an ISF patrol which arrived and managed to get the F-FDTL members to return to their headquarters at Tasi Tolu.

g. With reference to the five men who were detained March 16 by F-FDTL but not brought to the Comoro UNPOL station by F-FDTL (Ref A), F-FDTL still has not provided any accounting to UNMIT for what happened to them. Additionally, during March 21 meeting with SRSG Atul Khare, SRSG was asked whether he was aware of the fact that these individuals brought to UNPOL by F-FDTL had in fact been beaten, to which Khare replied that this had not occurred. Two days later Khare contacted the Embassy and corroborated earlier reporting that these individuals had in fact been beaten. He stated that he would demand that PM Jose Ramos-Horta conduct a formal inquiry. UNMIT's Human Rights Unit later confirmed to Embassy that four of the 10 who were detained did have visible evidence of abuse when they were released by F-FDTL.

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13. (C) All of the above incidents occurred following a March 20 statement by Ruak to Ramos-Horta, ISF Commander Brigadier Mal Rerden, and the SRSG that "there are now systems in place to prevent such transgressions from happening again," begging the question of what Ruak is in fact doing to control his forces in Dili. Several reports of incidents where F-FDTL soldiers have been drunk while on duty also suggest that Ruak is not in full control of his soldiers.

14. (C) Additionally, the F-FDTL liaison officer to the ISF told us on March 28 that he receives little to no guidance from his headquarters, and rarely if ever is able to provide F-FDTL operational details to the ISF because he knows nothing about them. He added that he had not even met with Ruak since 2004, and that the only reason he knew of a recent F-FDTL deployment to the World Food Program warehouse in Dili was because he happened upon F-FDTL soldiers who had secured the site the previous weekend. A senior UNMIT official also noted that several of the F-FDTL static positions do not have access to reliable means of communication with either UNPOL or their own headquarters in the event of an incident. All of these factors point to UNMIT's and ISF's collective dilemma to engage in simple operational coordination with F-FDTL, and underscore the risks assumed in collaborating with a defense force of such meager levels of capability. It was UNPOL Commissioner Rodolfo Tor who requested that the GOET utilize F-FDTL in Dili.

15. (C) Comment: Senior ISF, UNMIT, and diplomatic sources continue to paint the deployment of F-FDTL in Dili in a cautious light, and uniformly assert that it is only a matter of time before there will be an armed engagement involving an ISF element intervening at the scene of an F-FDTL ROE transgression. Post concurs with this assessment, noting that F-FDTL soldiers

in Dili are strongly of the opinion that they are here to paternalistically "protect the community." To the typical F-FDTL soldier, this may mean that a few rifle butt strokes and warning shots are acceptable. As this is an unacceptable paradigm from the perspective of the ISF and UNMIT, opportunities for conflict between F-FDTL and the ISF (or UNPOL) likely remain. If there is an armed engagement between the ISF and F-FDTL, regardless of scope, there will be pressures from the ranks of F-FDTL to respond. And if Ruak is unable to get his units to even follow their own ROE, it could be even more difficult to control his defense force if he suddenly were faced with the prospect of ISF-induced F-FDTL casualties. In light of the events of the past year, such an incident could lead to increased tensions between Timorese regional groups, National Police (PNTL) and F-FDTL, and certainly again raise the specter of anti-Australian outbursts. Post judges it unlikely that there would be a conflict between UNPOL and F-FDTL because of the lightly-armed status of UNPOL members (in fact, many are unarmed). Most military observers in East Timor believe if there is an incident involving F-FDTL and UNPOL, UNPOL members will quickly back down. End comment.

HARSHA
NAGY